

opinion in rhyme. When he is not up to going to the courthouse these days, he participates by telephone on the oral arguments and the conferences where the three judge panel discuss the cases.

Among his many accomplishments is his talent to play by ear any song known in the American repertoire. The Supreme Court of the United States has chosen him as the Court's pianist for their periodic sing-alongs. Rivaling his attributes as a jurist, Justice David Souter wrote in May 2001 in a University of Pennsylvania Law Review "Tribute to the Honorable Edward R. Becker": "I've never heard anyone call for a tune the Judge didn't know; never have I seen him read a sheet of music." Edward R. Becker is truly the personification of the Renaissance man.

Recently, he undertook a new challenge by testifying and organizing a panel of judges to appear before the Judiciary Committee in support of the nomination of Third Circuit Judge Samuel Alito for the Supreme Court. He did so out of conviction that Judge Alito was being unfairly criticized. Based on working with him for over 15 years, he advised the Judiciary Committee that after oral arguments, when the three panel judges would retire to deliberate, Judge Alito had an open mind, no agenda and was a superb jurist. That panel of current and former Third Circuit judges, led by Judge Becker, provided important testimony for the Judiciary Committee, leading to Judge Alito's confirmation.

For a man with such achievements, Judge Becker remains the model of modesty and humility. He continues to live in an unpretentious house in a working-class neighborhood in Northeast Philadelphia where he moved with his parents when he was 3. Even as the Chief Judge of the Circuit, he continued to ride public transportation to the Federal Courthouse, surprising fellow riders to see a man of his prominence sitting among them. He is the quintessential family man, with an accomplished wife, three professional children and four adorable grandchildren.

When his friends enjoy a variety of cocktails, his favorite drink continues to be "Schuylkill punch," which translates into Philadelphia tap water.

When I was diagnosed with Hodgkin's last year, I followed his advice on how to cope. He was an inspiration and model to me.

Watching close friends suffer and die from cancer, and from my own experience with Hodgkin's, all of that has reinforced my determination to work to secure sufficient funding for the National Institutes of Health to conquer cancer and other maladies.

In 1970, President Nixon declared war against cancer. If the United States had approached that war with the same intensity we do other wars, the cure for cancer would have been found long ago.

Two years ago I saw my chief of staff, Carey Lackman, a beautiful young woman of 48, die from breast cancer. A few months later, I saw the same fate

for Paula Kline, the wife of my son's law partner.

Visiting Judge Becker at his home last Saturday, I saw a large stack of briefs on his desk and observed him carrying on his judicial duties from his living room with determination and gusto, notwithstanding his prostate cancer. From my own experience with Hodgkin's, I know cancer can be beaten. From watching Judge Becker, I have seen him beat cancer for more than 3 years.

My statement today has the dual purpose, No. 1, of recognizing and acknowledging the public service and contributions of a truly great American, and, No. 2, urging my Senate colleagues who have come to know, admire, and respect Judge Becker to support adequate funding to win the war against cancer.

I thank the Chair. In the absence of any Senator seeking recognition, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If the Senator will withhold, the Senator from Oklahoma is recognized.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, may I express my regret that I don't have eyes in the back of my head.

Mr. INHOFE. I always thought you did.

Mr. SPECTER. The distinguished Senator from Oklahoma, Senator INHOFE, is standing right behind me. I should have felt the radiation of his powerful personality. I yield to my distinguished colleague.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma is recognized.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I thank the senior Senator from Pennsylvania. Before he leaves the Chamber, I want to applaud the work Senator SPECTER has done in getting these judges confirmed. It has been heavy lifting. We all know that. We also know probably from looking back, when we look back 10 years or 20 years from now on accomplishments, that perhaps getting these judges confirmed will be the major accomplishment of this legislative session.

IRAQ UPDATE

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I am always distressed with the media and the way they are misrepresenting what is going on in Iraq, and particularly the accomplishments this last weekend. It is hard to believe.

On Saturday, the Iraqi Parliament, which was elected last December, convened to fill the top Government leadership positions. Exemplifying the democratic traditions beginning to take root in Iraq, the Iraqi Parliament successfully negotiated these nominees, clearing the way for the first permanent, popularly elected Government in Iraq's history.

The first permanent, popularly elected Government in Iraq's history—that is mind boggling.

In addition, I want to commend our soldiers in the theater. Without their

brave efforts, this progress would have been impossible.

I just returned from my 11th trip to the Iraqi AOR. I come back, and I remember the stories that are told by our different troops there. Some of the things they come up with are amazing—the anecdotal things, stories that are comparable to the stories we heard back during World War II.

American soldiers continue to clear out terrorist strongholds, allowing democracy a chance to flourish. The accomplishments of American soldiers have permitted Iraqis the opportunity to vote and elect a parliament that has now produced leaders of this nation's national unity government. It has been a long road getting to this point, and we have further to go. There are some major hurdles these new leaders must keep in mind. These are Iraqi leaders. These are the elected leaders. For the first time in Iraq's history, they must build consensus for reigning in the militias, protecting critical infrastructure such as oil pipelines, preserving human rights for all Iraqi citizens, implementing necessary reforms to revive the civil economy, and, perhaps most importantly, the new leaders must inspire confidence in the permanent Government.

While what these seven nominees put forward on Saturday represents a huge political breakthrough, challenges lie ahead for both Iraq's new leadership and our troops stationed there. Our best men and women continue to serve valiantly in some of the most trying conditions. Some have been gravely wounded, and some have paid the ultimate price. The question you hear quite often is, they say, Is it worth it? It is impossible for me to answer that question on an individual basis, when you think about the depth of suffering of a wife or a child or a father, the loss of a loved one. I mourn that we have lost even one life, but I do not regret the cause in which that life is lost.

I will say that as America's elected leaders, we have been chosen to use our best judgment in these most difficult choices. Throughout history people have chosen to take an uncompromising stand in what they believe in. They have done this because they understand some things are so valuable that we must risk everything to preserve them.

Can the cost of preserving freedom ever be too great? That is a question I wrestle with day and night. As I do, I am sure other members of our Government and military leaders do the same.

I know freedom cannot be imposed, but I also know the thirst for it cannot be quenched. If September 11 showed us anything, it was that we affect and are affected by the rest of the world. Standing by and hoping for the best is not an option. When it comes to fighting terrorism around the world, we are involved, whether we like it or not, and the quicker we wake up to this reality, the better chance we have at setting

things on the right course. The American public must be as resolute in this mission as our troops on the ground.

President Bush has stood stalwartly behind our troops and the Iraqi people and measurable progress has been achieved. It would be appropriate to list a few of these. You don't get this from the media, so you are going to have to get it from the floor, from those who have been over there personally and witnessed things happening.

Iraq's first Ambassador to the United States in 15 years presented his credentials to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice at a State Department ceremony on April 11.

The Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq calculated that nearly 11.9 million Iraqis—approximately 75 percent—voted in the December 2005 elections. This represents an increase of about 4 million voters from the January 2005 election.

Since June 2004, when the Coalition transferred sovereignty, Iraqi people elected an interim government in January 2005, drafted and ratified a constitution in October 2005, and elected a 4-year, constitutionally based Government in December 2005.

There have been strong, positive economic changes as well. Iraq's economy is recovering after 30 years of dictatorship and lack of infrastructure maintenance. In 2005, the Iraqi economy grew an estimated 3 percent in real terms. The International Monetary Fund anticipates the Iraqi economy will grow by more than 10 percent in 2006. Certainly the Presiding Officer, one of the greatest economists of this body, understands the significance of the accomplishments in the economy of Iraq.

Under Saddam Hussein's regime, Iraqis' standard of living deteriorated rapidly. Iraq's per capita income dropped from \$3,800 in 1980—higher than Spain at that time—to \$715 in 2002, which is lower than Angola. Today economic recovery is picking up, with gross domestic product growing from \$18.9 billion in 2002 to \$33.1 billion in 2005.

Before liberation, Iraq's cities suffered from inadequate sewage systems. The United States has helped Iraqis build or repair sewage treatment plants for 5.1 million Iraqis. U.S.-funded projects have improved access to clean water for 3.1 million people.

You almost have to go there and see these people, and see what they are doing now that they say they couldn't have done. It is very difficult for an American to walk through the streets—whether it is Tikrit, Fallujah, Baghdad, or anywhere else—without people running up to you and saying my daughter can now get married, our girls can now go to school, now we have water we can drink, now we have a sewage system that we haven't had since the end of the regime of Saddam Hussein.

I think the greatest miracle of Iraq which the "cut and run" caucus refuses to acknowledge has been the perform-

ance of the security forces. Coalition military commanders are focused on developing Iraqi police forces, and are helping Iraqis develop a disciplined force that protects the rights of all Iraqis. One-hundred thirty Iraqi Minister of Defense combat battalions are now rising up from just a handful in August 2004. Of the 110 bases operated by Coalition forces, 34 have been closed and transferred to the Iraqis. That is something we have to understand. We were manning 100 percent of the bases of operation, and a third are now being taken care of by the Iraqis.

Thirteen Iraqi brigade headquarters and fifty battalions have assumed battle space. They are taking care of their own battle space. Iraqi forces control 65 percent of Baghdad.

I recall meeting General Madhi in Fallujah. At that time he had been working as a brigade commander for Saddam Hussein. He hated Americans until Saddam came down and General Madhi became the brigade commander for security forces in Fallujah. He started training with the Marines in Fallujah. They call it embedded training. They get in there with him. They worked together and they became so close that when we rotated the Marines out of Fallujah, they got together and they cried.

That same general, General Madhi, was transferred to Baghdad where he took over the security, starting from the east to the western part of Baghdad, and now has control of 65 percent of the eastern part of Baghdad. We do not have Americans doing that. We have Iraqis doing that. There are more than 250,000 trained and equipped Iraqi security forces, up from 115,000 16 months ago.

I stood here 3 months ago and talked about my experiences with the commanders in the field. They have a good answer to the question that keeps being asked each Member of the Senate: When will they be on their own and handle their own security? How long will it be? Not many politicians want to give the answer to something like that. I don't mind doing it because I think it is a good idea of what the answer is.

I remember talking to the commanders in the field over the last several years and they have consistently said if we get to the point where we can have 11 divisions of Iraqis trained and equipped—that translates to 325,000—they will be ready to take over their own security. That does not mean all Americans will leave. We still have American troops and an American presence in Bosnia, Kosovo, Sinai, and other places, but they are not doing the security there.

At that time when we get to the point where they have 11 divisions, which should be by the end of this year, or at the very latest by midyear of the following year, they will be able to handle their own security.

Something heretofore considered to be virtually impossible is going to hap-

pen. One of the main problems with this war is how the media is focused on weapons of mass destruction. We never should have been talking about weapons of mass destruction. We know Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. We know that some 4,000 of their own people were killed with weapons of mass destruction. We know in the 8-year Iran-Iraq war, over 100,000 Iranians were killed with weapons of mass destruction. We know they had them. There is no question. That was not the important thing.

The important thing in Iraq is that the most sophisticated training was taking place, training people to be sophisticated terrorists in cities such as Samarra, Ramadi, and Salman Pak, where they had the major trading areas. They are not training anymore. One Iraqi defector, CAPT Sabah Khodada, observed foreign Arabs being trained in hijackings, kidnapping of airplanes, trains, public buses, planting explosives in cities, and suicide operations. It could very well be most likely that is where the training took place that caused their successful attack on America's soil on September 11. Very likely it was. That is what they were teaching at that time.

We went into Iraq and we confiscated 2 million "exploitable" documents that we are still analyzing. Some of the documents have already proven the existence of the camps.

I want to lay out the facts. We know Saddam was giving money to the Palestinian families of suicide bombers. We know Saddam violated numerous U.N. resolutions since the end of Operation Desert Storm. We know the air defense forces would regularly shoot at our airplanes. We know he tortured, abused, murdered, and massacred many thousands of his own people.

I ask a very important question. Where would we be now if we had not gone into Iraq? The answer will be left up to history to decide. Probably we will never know. We know we have not been attacked on our territory since September 11. My own personal belief is the work we have done, the successes in Iraq have been responsible for that great victory.

I returned from my 11th trip to the Iraqi AOR. I met with the people over there, including General Madhi. However, the cut-and-run caucus can only think of surrender. They are still out there. Recent casualty rates exposed the insurgents' true intentions.

A lot of people are concerned, as I am, about the Americans, but if you see what has happened in the first 3 months of this year, in January and February and March of this year, the insurgents, the terrorists have been able to successfully kill 112 U.S. forces. However, during that same period of time they have killed 2,720 Iraqi civilians and security forces. What a huge change from the past.

We need to judge the insurgencies not by what they claim but who they actually are attacking. This is an

enemy that we cannot surrender to or give ground to. Their objective is fear. Their method is death. They will never be appeased. If we were to withdraw early, we would abandon Iraq to violence, but we also would cause irreparable damage to this country.

It is not about Iraq, it is about defending America. We were attacked on our soil. The cut-and-run caucus is always there. Surrender is always their option. They are appeasers. An appeaser is someone who throws his friend to the alligators hoping they eat him last. No man lives when freedom fails. The best men rot in filthy jails. Those who yell, "appease, appease," are hanged by those they tried to please.

My wife and I have been married 46 years. We have 20 kids and grandchildren, and I say this: We are winning the war on terror, and winning it in their territory. I ask God to richly bless the decisionmakers and the troops.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, there have been several speeches today—I was not here, but I got a briefing—about the high gasoline prices, and I want to clarify some of the comments raised by the minority leader today and his Members in the press.

The minority is so eager to blame others for high gas prices they seem to ignore the fact that they do not bother to consult the media when they have a deadline. I am more interested in reducing high gasoline prices for American families than to bluster the selfish political advantage, unlike the minority.

I took the time to consider the non-partisan experts of the Energy Information Administration and what they had to say. According to the EIA, there are three reasons leading to high gasoline prices. First, the Nation has not fully recovered from hurricane damage. Twenty percent of the domestic oil production and three refineries, representing nearly 5 percent of refining capacity, remain offline. However, offshore production is resuming and refineries are restarting. The EIA points out that the industry delayed maintenance to maximize production following the hurricanes. Today they must switch over to summer blends.

Yet the focus is on the politics. The senior Senator from New York charged the refiners are purposely withholding capacity from traditionally operating at 90 percent to the current operation of 85 percent. In demanding an investigation, that Senator also implied that the refiners should not maintain their facilities to ensure a safe work environment for employees or they should not switch to special summer blends.

One thing was clear. The senior Senator from New York did not bother to consider the fact that nearly 5 percent of domestic refining capacity is still

offline due to hurricanes. Mr. President, 90 percent minus 5 percent equals 85 percent, as the investigation found.

Second, companies are increasing inventories to hedge against potential disruption in the future. Most of the time, the minority would call such risk management responsible but not when they celebrate the misfortune of the American people.

The third reason has to do with MTBE, and I won't get into that. I will only say this. I am the chairman of a committee that is called the Environment and Public Works Committee. It is our responsibility to handle most of the problems. We are in an energy crisis. There is no question about it. But for any Democrat to stand on the floor of this Senate and try to point the finger at Republicans for high gasoline prices is really absurd.

I have sat there and watched the votes take place. We are not able to vote on ANWR in northern Alaska. Right down party lines, Republicans are supporting it, the Alaskans are supporting it, the Democrats are opposing it. We are not able to go offshore and take advantage of the tremendous reserves that are there. It is right down party lines. Right down party lines they stopped us from being able to have tax incentives to go after marginal production.

I am from a State that has marginal production. There is a statistic that if we had all the marginal production flowing today that has been plugged in the last 10 years, it would be more than we are currently importing from Saudi Arabia.

Lastly, in the area of nuclear energy, it goes right down party lines.

I had a refinery bill that would have coupled with some of the closed military bases and said cities can use EDA grants to go in there and set up refineries and employ people and increase our refining capacity, and it was blocked right down party lines.

So the Democrats are clearly responsible for these problems we have in trying to increase the productivity, increase the production that is potentially out there today.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:45 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 9:45 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 5:12 p.m., adjourned until Tuesday, April 25, 2006, at 9:45 a.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate April 24, 2006:

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

ANITA K. BLAIR, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE, VICE MICHAEL L. DOMINGUEZ.

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

MARK V. ROSENKER, OF MARYLAND, TO BE CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

FOR A TERM OF TWO YEARS, VICE ELLEN G. ENGLEMAN, TERM EXPIRED.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

DIRK KEMPTHORNE, OF IDAHO, TO BE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR, VICE GALE ANN NORTON, RESIGNED.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DANIEL S. SULLIVAN, OF ALASKA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE (ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS AFFAIRS), VICE EARL ANTHONY WAYNE.

LESLIE V. ROWE, OF WASHINGTON, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO PAPUA NEW GUINEA, AND TO SERVE CONCURRENTLY AND WITHOUT ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION AS AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE SOLOMON ISLANDS AND AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF VANUATU.

ROBERT S. FORD, OF MARYLAND, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF COUNSELOR, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA.

ANNE E. DERSE, OF MARYLAND, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

PAUL A. DENETT, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE ADMINISTRATOR FOR FEDERAL PROCUREMENT POLICY, VICE DAVID SAFAVIAN.

THE JUDICIARY

DANIEL PORTER JORDAN III, OF MISSISSIPPI, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI, VICE TOM S. LEE, RETIRED.

PHILIP S. GUTIERREZ, OF CALIFORNIA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA, VICE TERRY J. HATTER, JR., RETIRED.

GUSTAVO ANTONIO GELPI, OF PUERTO RICO, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF PUERTO RICO, VICE HECTOR M. LAFFITTE, RETIRED.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

ERIK C. PETERSON, OF WISCONSIN, TO BE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS, VICE J. B. VAN HOLLEN, RESIGNED.

FOREIGN SERVICE

THE FOLLOWING-NAMED PERSONS OF THE AGENCIES INDICATED FOR APPOINTMENT AS FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS OF THE CLASSES STATED. FOR APPOINTMENT AS FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS OF CLASS THREE, CONSULAR OFFICERS AND SECRETARIES IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

ANITA KATIAL, OF ILLINOIS
ERICH KUSS, OF NEW YORK
MORGAN A. PERKINS, OF MARYLAND
MARK A. PETRY, OF INDIANA
SUSAN B. PHILLIPS, OF VIRGINIA
KARINA RAMOS, OF VIRGINIA
MICHAEL M. RIEDEL, OF MARYLAND
CHARLES L. RUSH, OF FLORIDA
JUSTINA L. TORRY, OF MISSOURI

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

SANDILLO N. BANERJEE, OF WASHINGTON
DANIEL T. CROCKER, OF CALIFORNIA
MARY A. NANDI, OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

REX KENNETH MOSER, OF TEXAS

FOR APPOINTMENT AS FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS OF CLASS FOUR, CONSULAR OFFICERS AND SECRETARIES IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

HELEN L. PETERSON, OF CALIFORNIA
SCOTT D. POZIL, OF WASHINGTON
CHRISTINA A. SHARKEY, OF FLORIDA

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

COLLEEN ELIZABETH ALTSFLOCK, OF WASHINGTON
HEIDI R. AROLA, OF MINNESOTA
ANTHONY WALTER BAIRD, OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
JOSHUA NATHAN BAKER, OF FLORIDA
NATALIE ASHTON BAKER, OF TEXAS
MAY GANAL BAPTISTA, OF CALIFORNIA
CHASE A. BEAMER, OF CALIFORNIA
LAURA L. BIEDERACH, OF CALIFORNIA
DANIEL R. BISCHOF, OF FLORIDA
STEVEN ROBERTS BITNER, OF CALIFORNIA
MICHAEL F. BRENNAN, OF TEXAS
ROBERT CHRISTOPHER BRONK, OF NEW YORK
BENJAMIN A. BROWN II, OF VIRGINIA
GINGER MARIE CAMPBELL, OF CALIFORNIA
SUSAN CAROL CHEATHAM, OF CALIFORNIA
CHRISTOPHER J. DEGNAN, OF VIRGINIA
ZOJA DERETIC, OF CALIFORNIA
DANIEL J. ERNST, OF FLORIDA
Y. ROBERT EWING, OF VIRGINIA
SHARON K. FEATHERSTONE, OF VIRGINIA
JAMES BRENNAN FENNELL, OF NEW JERSEY